

**TOWN OF VALDESE  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 3, 2025**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, February 3, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., in the Town Council Chambers at Town Hall, 102 Massel Avenue SW, Valdese, North Carolina. The Council meeting was live-streamed on YouTube @townofvaldese. The following were present: Mayor Charles Watts, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, Councilwoman Heather Ward, Councilwoman Melinda Zimmerman, and Councilman Glenn Harvey. Also present were: Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel, Town Attorney Tim Swanson, and various Department Heads.

Absent: Town Clerk Jessica Lail

A quorum was present.

Pastor Bill Roberts from the First United Methodist Church of Valdese offered the invocation. Following the invocation, Mayor Watts led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT:** Mayor Pro Tem Gary Ogle read the following open forum/public comment guidelines: The council shall provide at least one period for public comment per month during a regular meeting, unless no regular meeting is held that month. Any individual or group who wishes to address the council shall inform the town clerk, any time prior to the start of the meeting, and provide their name, address and subject matter about which they wish to speak. Person(s) must be present if they wish to address the Council. Comments should be limited to five minutes per speaker.

Open Forum is not intended to require Council or staff to answer impromptu questions. Speakers will address all comments to the entire Council as a whole and not one individual member. Discussions between speakers and the audience will not be permitted. Speakers will maintain decorum at all times. Speakers are expected to be courteous and respectful at all times regardless of who occupies the Council chairs. These guidelines will help ensure that a safe and productive meeting is held and all those wishing to address the Council will be afforded the opportunity.

**POOL STRUCTURE REFLECTION – IZAIAH WEBB, 300 CHURCH ST NW, VALDESE:** Mr. Webb, a new community member originally from Baton, shared his concerns after attending his first meeting. He thanked the new Councilwoman for highlighting the town's 10-year plan, approved on June 3, 2024, and noted that the Council appears to get sidetracked on future matters rather than focusing on immediate priorities. As a healthcare professional, he emphasized the need for a public safety building. He recounted a personal experience where he encountered an individual in need of assistance while walking his dog at night, which reinforced his belief in the importance of public safety improvements. Mr. Webb also expressed his support for addressing multiple issues at once rather than postponing them. He shared his disappointment regarding the town's lack of an indoor swimming facility, stating that he was initially excited about the covered pool but later learned that the bubble had been removed. He hopes for a permanent solution, as there are limited winter swimming options in the area.

**POOL – JOHN LAFFERTY, 313 MT. VIEW AVE, VALDESE:** Dr. Lafferty recounted that 25 years ago, then-Town Manager Jeff Morse proposed a visionary plan to cover the Valdese pool for year-round use. Despite the construction requiring the removal of a tennis court, Dr. Lafferty immediately supported the idea, recognizing its value to the community. For over two decades, the covered pool provided year-round swimming for high school teams, senior swimmers, patients in need of aquatic therapy, and local families. He noted that while the bubble collapsed in January 2024, it had been in poor condition for months prior, limiting its use. He expressed concern over the Council's decision to postpone further discussion on the matter until July, emphasizing that while swimming may not be deemed an essential service, it remains an important one for many residents. Dr. Lafferty also questioned the completeness of the interim Town Manager's report on the issue, stating that it may have overlooked several groups. After surveying longtime residents, he found no precedent for significantly postponing a major service once established. He urged the Council to recognize that delaying the decision further could result in a second winter without aquatic activities and warned that continued postponement risks becoming a permanent reduction in services.

**SIDEWALK – BEN LUTZ, 1104 LUTZ ST SW, VALDESE:** Mr. Lutz, a Ward Four resident, expressed his primary concern for prioritizing the fire and police departments. As a former firefighter, he emphasized the extensive training, time commitment, and risks involved in their work. He urged the Council to focus on

these essential services, stating that while other matters are important, ensuring adequate support for public safety should come first. He also raised concerns about road conditions in his area, specifically mentioning Hoyle Street, Orchard Street, South Avenue, Colonial Drive, Fox Ave SW, and Cline. He noted that many patches and repairs over the years have resulted in rough and uneven roads, leading to drivers avoiding certain areas. Mr. Lutz cautioned against overextending the budget on multiple projects at once, stressing the importance of financial reserves for unforeseen emergencies. He referenced past disasters, such as Hurricane Hugo, as a reminder of the need for preparedness. He concluded by expressing his appreciation for the opportunity to speak and his confidence in the Council and Mayor.

**POOL STRUCTURE – NANCY TUCKER, 210 FOREST DR NE, VALDESE:** Ms. Tucker expressed her disappointment over the delay in constructing a permanent pool structure. She recalled that in December, the Town Council unanimously approved the project, which led her to believe progress was being made. Encouraged by the decision, she donated to the pool fund and encouraged others to contribute. However, in January, three council members voted to delay the project by six months, which she found frustrating and unnecessary, as key financial and logistical details were already known. She criticized the reasoning behind the delay, particularly concerns about summer swimming access, arguing that had construction begun as planned, the pool could soon be operational for year-round use. She emphasized the potential benefits, including swim lessons, exercise programs, and revenue from memberships and events. Ms. Tucker also referenced recent public input sessions for the Parks and Recreation 10-year plan, where many residents voiced strong support for the pool project. She urged the Council to listen to the community, move forward with the project, and provide clear commitment, as fundraising efforts remain stalled due to uncertainty. She concluded by requesting the Council to fulfill what she believes was the original intent of their vote and make her "Christmas wish" come true.

**SIDWALK – BETH HEILE, 5291 MINERAL SPRINGS MTN AVE, VALDESE:** Ms. Heile, President of Friends of the Valdese Rec and Executive Director of the Burke River Trail Association, urged the Town Council not to withdraw from the municipal agreement for the Lovelady Sidewalk Project. She outlined key clarifications from a January 24 meeting with Representative Blackwell, Councilman Harvey, and WPCOG staff member Daniel Odom:

1. The town has 1–2 years to act on the agreement, so there is no urgency in making a decision.
2. Reimbursement of the \$1.1 million grant can be submitted every 30 days, meaning funds do not have to be fronted until the project is completed.
3. The town's 20% match (\$286,000) can come from external sources, and efforts are already underway to secure those funds.

She stressed that withdrawing from the grant could negatively impact future funding opportunities and that initial findings indicate the grant would not affect the town's credit rating or ability to secure a USDA loan for the public safety building. Further verification is being sought. Ms. Heile emphasized that the Lovelady sidewalk is part of a broader regional and state trail initiative, including the Wilderness Gateway State Trail and the Burke River Trail, which aim to enhance economic development and quality of life. The sidewalk would help complete a seven-mile pedestrian loop connecting Main Street, McGalliard Falls, and Valdese Lakeside Park. While alternative options for other sections are being explored, the Lovelady project is currently eligible for grant funding. Additionally, a \$2.2 million Hoyle Creek Restoration and Side Path Project will cover the cost of a pedestrian bridge over Hoyle Creek, reducing the town's financial burden. She urged the Council to either take no action on withdrawing or postpone the decision, allowing more time to secure the necessary matching funds with Representative Blackwell's assistance. She concluded by asking the Council to consider the long-term vision and not withdraw from the municipal agreement.

**SIDEWALK – RICK MCCLURD, 408 GARROU AVE SE, VALDESE:** Mr. McClurd stated that he does not believe the Town of Valdese has withdrawn from the pool cover project but rather decided on a six-month delay. He noted that past Town Councils failed to allocate funds for pool replacement over the years, despite knowing it would need repairs. He emphasized that the delay does not constitute an emergency and pointed out broader financial challenges, including federal and state funding limitations and the redirection of resources to aid communities in the mountains. He stressed that town priorities should be focused on funding the police and fire departments, which also lack long-term financial planning. He noted that winter pool usage is limited to about 61 people and that waiting six months will not significantly impact the project. He supported the temporary delay, stating that the project will move forward when funding opportunities become clearer.

**INTRODUCTION NEW BUSINESS OWNER – KEVIN DIXON, 2343 DULATOWN HGTS. RD, LENOIR:**

Mr. Dixon introduced himself and his wife, Tamika Dixon, as owners of the daycare **Giggles n’ Grins**, soon to be renamed **Mimi’s Kidz**. He expressed appreciation for the warm welcome and support they have received from town staff, including Town Hall and the Fire Marshal. He stated that they look forward to doing business in Valdese and becoming part of the community.

**TOWN FINANCES – MARK SMALL, 712 MARIA AVE, VALDESE:** Mr. Small expressed concerns over town spending priorities, emphasizing the need to prioritize infrastructure over amenities. He acknowledged the value of projects like the pool and trails but highlighted the town’s existing debt obligations, including loans for the Splash Pad and Town Hall. He also raised concerns about aging equipment at the water and sewage plant, the uncertainty of grant funding due to recent federal actions, and potential impacts of a Burke County property reassessment. He cautioned against additional financial commitments without raising taxes and stressed the importance of addressing critical needs, such as the public safety facility, before funding non-essential projects.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT – KAREN CARUSO, 805 MICOL AVE, VALDESE:** Ms. Caruso provided the Clerk with her Public Comment. “Yesterday I was forwarded two emails a friend received last week. They included tax rate surveys authored by two council members with the promise to share the feedback from the email with a third council member. The 60 “friends and neighbors” who received them were encouraged to share the emails with others who care, so that’s why they were forwarded to me. I do care and I think you should go with the tax rate the staff recommends. The troubling thing about these emails conducting town business, is they were sent from and copied to the personal email accounts of the two council members, not their official town accounts. This is repeat behavior that local media has covered before. This isn’t transparency so here’s some food for thought for council. Could these ethical lapses make a manager candidate hesitant to accept your employment offer? I hope that you will also ask yourselves if the apparent support for months on end of the sidewalk grant and the pool cover, only to be halted at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, could have a negative impact on prospective managers. Could the disrespectful treatment of interim managers, department heads, vendors, business owners, and others standing where I am right now, also not cast council in the best light? After a year, and nearly five times the cost to an “outside” firm, and still no manager, council will, hopefully, be signing the same \$3,500 COG contract presented a year ago. At the pre-agenda meeting last week, the COG representative was asked if they were selling the town to prospective candidates. I believe the town sells itself. I would like to ask if the council should be selling itself to candidates. After all, they will be serving at your pleasure, until they aren’t. Do you think they are looking at the meeting videos, reading minutes, and newspaper articles? What might they see or read that would keep them from even applying for the manager position? Have you asked yourselves if you’re the visionary leaders a qualified executive would want to partner with to create a successful future for this town? I mean absolutely no disrespect to any of you. You’re dedicated and work hard for the town. Think about chewing on this food for thought as you continue the search for a new manager. Thank you.”

**PUBLIC SAFETY & POOL STRUCTURE – JEAN-MARIE COLE, 705 BERTIS ST, VALDESE:** Ms. Cole emphasized the urgency of resolving two key issues: the public safety building and the permanent pool structure. She expressed concern that progress on the police and fire station projects had stalled despite prior planning, land purchases, and architectural studies. She warned that altering the design-build approach could discourage potential contractors. Regarding the pool structure, she suggested working with the existing contractor to begin preliminary work, allowing for completion after the summer season. She urged the Council to act decisively, avoid further delays, and address both projects simultaneously to prevent repeating past mistakes of procrastination.

**ADDED CLOSED SESSION:** Councilman Harvey made a motion to add a Closed Session Pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee, so that WPCOG can make a presentation on the Town Manager Search to the Council, seconded by Councilman Ogle. The vote was unanimous and carried.

Councilman Harvey noted that Item 7 H iii. on the agenda title should be changed to, *FY 25 Year-To-Date Financial Results*.

**CONSENT AGENDA: (enacted by one motion)**

**APPROVED PRE-AGENDA MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2025**

**APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF JANUARY 6, 2025**

**APPROVED REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 13, 2025**

**APPROVED CLOSED SESSION MINUTES OF JANUARY 13, 2025**

**APPROVED FY 25-26 AUDIT CONTRACT - LOWDERMILK CHURCH & CO., LLP** Audit contract for FY 25-26, in the amount of \$18,250.00. A copy of the audit contract can be obtained by contacting the Clerk's office.

**APPROVED REQUEST FROM VALDESE AMERICAN LEGION LADIES AUXILIARY TO SELL ALCOHOL AT TOWN SPONSORED EVENT** The Ladies Auxiliary has been authorized to sell beer at the Independence Day Celebration on July 4, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m.

**APPROVED REQUEST FROM WALDENSIAN STYLE WINES TO SELL ALCOHOL AT TOWN SPONSORED EVENTS** Waldensian Style Wines has been authorized to sell wine at the Craft Market event on April 26, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Independence Day Celebration on July 4, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m., and the 49th Annual Waldensian Festival events on August 8, 2025, from 5:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. & August 9, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Christmas in November Craft & Gift Show on November 7, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. & November 8, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**APPROVED BUDGET AMENDMENT – WAYNE OWENS GYMNASIUM GUTTER & FASCIA**

Valdese Town Council Meeting

Monday, February 3, 2025

Budget Amendment #

8-10

Subject:

Wayne Owens Gymnasium Gutter and Fascia

Proposed Action:

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Valdese that, pursuant to Section 15 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following amendment is made to the annual budget ordinance for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025:

Section I:

The following revenues available to the Town will be increased:

Account	Description	Decrease/ Debit	Increase/ Credit
10.3990.000	General Fund Balance Appr.		5,600
	Total	\$0	\$5,600

Amounts appropriated for expenditure are hereby amended as follows:

Account	Description	Increase/ Debit	Decrease/ Credit
10.6200.150	Maint. Repair of Buildings	5,600	
	Total	\$5,600	\$0

Section II:

Copies of this budget amendment shall be furnished to the Clerk to the Governing Board, to the Budget Officer and the Finance Officer for their direction.

Councilwoman Ward made a motion to approve the aforementioned items on the Consent Agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**End Consent Agenda**

**ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA:** None

**APPROVED PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED NEW UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (UDO)**

Mayor Watts opened the Public Hearing. Ashley Young, WPCOG Senior Community & Regional Planner, Interim Town Planner for the TOV presented the following information:

**REQUESTED ACTION:** Adoption of Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) which combines and replaces the Town's current Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

**BACKGROUND:** Communities across North Carolina have been adopting UDOs to combine planning and development ordinances into a single, easy-to-use document, clarify guidelines with improved text and better graphics, and address persistent code issues and changes to state law.

Over the past two years, Green Heron Planning, LLC, Ben Hitchings, has worked with former planning director, Larry Johnson, and Town Attorney, Tim Swanson, to develop the Town's UDO by doing the following: (1) Combine the Town's existing Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, and Flood Damage Prevention ordinance into a single, easy-to-use document; (2) Create summary tables to provide a quick reference on the Development Review Procedures, Permitted Uses, and Dimensional Standards established by the Town; (3) Clarify and update the ordinance standards and procedures to remove conflicting language and help comply with current state and federal law; and (4) Update and modernize the development standards to address community land use and development issues on selected topics.

The result is a document that, once adopted by the Town Council, will be easier to use and better meet the current planning and development needs of the Town. UDOs are living documents that often change with the evolving needs of the community. As a result, the Town should make periodic updates to the UDO to meet the needs of the community.

**REVIEW CRITERIA:**

1. Planning Board Recommendation: Planning Board reviewed the UDO throughout 2024 with former Planning Director, Larry Johnson, and consultant, Ben Hitchings. During the Planning Board Meeting on December 16, 2024 the Board reviewed and unanimously recommended the UDO for approval by Council.
2. Consistency with the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Plan: The Planning Board found the UDO to be consistent with the Valdese Vision adopted by the Valdese Town Council under the following provisions: (1) bringing the town's ordinances into compliance with current state statutes; (2) protecting natural environment and quality of life; (3) providing a clear and easy to understand ordinance that enhances readability; and (4) overall consistent with the Valdese Vision Plan.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff finds the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) **consistent** with the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future, and recommends approval with the following consistency statement:

Consistency Statement:

The Town of Valdese Council recommends approval of the Town of Valdese Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) under the following consistencies:

1. Brings the Town's ordinances into compliance with current state statutes;
2. Protection of the natural environment and quality of life for the community by including the floodplain and watershed ordinances within the UDO;
3. Providing a clear and easy to understand ordinance by combining currently separate ordinances into one cohesive document, enhancing formatting for readability, and by adding use tables to clearly illustrate what uses are permitted within zoning districts and steps for approval.
4. The UDO is consistent with the current land use plan, Valdese Vision Land Use Action Plan.

Ben Hitchings, Principal with Green Heron Planning provided an overview of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) project, which consolidates the Town's zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, and

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

flood damage prevention ordinance into a single, more user-friendly document. The UDO incorporates summary tables and graphics to improve clarity and accessibility for applicants, boards, and the community. He noted that the project ensures compliance with recent updates to North Carolina state statutes and provides an opportunity to refine standards, such as regulations for swimming pools in side yards. Mr. Hitchings worked closely with former Planning Director Larry Johnson, the Town Attorney Mr. Swanson, and staff to reorganize and review the ordinance for clarity and legal soundness. Following discussions with the Planning Board and Council, a redlined document and explanatory memo outlining content changes were provided. Additionally, a recent state law change necessitated structuring the UDO's implementation so that it becomes fully effective on July 1. However, new development proposals submitted before then may choose between the current or new standards. Mr. Hitchings concluded by stating that after years of work, the updated ordinance is now ready for Council's consideration and offered to answer any questions.

**ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF VALDESE TO ADOPT THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**

**WHEREAS**, in 2014, the Town of Valdese (the "**Town**") adopted a comprehensive land use plan entitled "The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future" (the "**Comprehensive Plan**") to guide the growth, development, and investments made in the Town and focus on land use, environmental protection, and infrastructure planning; and

**WHEREAS**, the Town has not undertaken a major revision of the zoning ordinance in over twenty (20) years; and

**WHEREAS**, the Unified Development Ordinance ("**UDO**"), a copy of which is attached hereto as **Exhibit A**, is a Town-wide effort to update the Town's development-related ordinances and regulations and consolidate them into one comprehensive document; and

**WHEREAS**, the UDO is divided into ten (10) sections: Chapter 1 (General Provisions); Chapter 2 (Administration); Chapter 3 (Zoning Districts); Chapter 4 (Use Standards); Chapter 5 (Development Standards); Chapter 6 (Subdivision Regulations); Chapter 7 (Flood Damage Prevention); Chapter 8 (Watershed Protection); Chapter 9 (Nonconformities); Chapter 10 (Enforcement); Chapter 11 (Interpretation and Definitions); and

**WHEREAS**, the UDO incorporates the best of the existing code with contemporary best practices and updates in the law into a new set of regulations, aligns the Town's development-related ordinances and regulations with the vision adopted in the Comprehensive Plan, and builds from other Town policies and initiatives to strategically guide the Town's future growth and development in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-604 and the current zoning ordinance provides that the Planning Board shall consider and make recommendations to the Town Council concerning each proposed zoning amendment and that, upon recommendation, Town Council shall hold a public hearing to consider the proposed amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, on December 16, 2024, the Planning Board considered and voted unanimously to recommend that Town Council amend the current zoning ordinances by adopting the UDO and found the UDO to be consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it hereby **ORDAINED**, by the Town Council of the Town of Valdese that:

**SECTION 1.** The UDO Public Hearing Draft, released on January \_\_\_\_, 2025, and presented to Town Council for public hearing on February 3, 2025, together with the Planning Board's recommendations dated December 16, 2024, and the revisions directed to Town Council (collectively the "**UDO**"), are hereby adopted and enacted into the Town Code on February 3, 2025. The UDO shall be codified into the Town Code as a new Chapter \_\_\_\_.

**SECTION 2.** The UDO, as further set forth in the ordinance, shall be effective as follows:

- A. The UDO shall apply to all existing and new land and development in the Town beginning on July 1, 2025.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

- B. Between February 3rd, 2025 and July 1, 2025, the UDO shall be available as an alternative set of Town land use requirements for all new development proposed, including any additions or enlargements to existing development and any changes of use on any properties. Any applications for new development that are submitted after February 3rd, 2025 and before July 1, 2025 may choose to be reviewed under either the new UDO or the existing development standards. No development application will be accepted for review during this time period until a letter has been provided that is signed by all property owners and notarized by a licensed Notary Public for all property proposed for inclusion in the new development. The letter shall state which set of development standards the applicant has chosen to have their project reviewed under, the existing standards or the new standards, and that they authorize this review using the applicable procedures specified by the Town in its ordinances.

**SECTION 3.** Except as otherwise authorized in this section, upon adoption of the UDO the following text amendments to the UDO may be made without further public hearing:

- A. Codify changes approved by Town Council in conjunction with the approval of the UDO.
- B. The addition of or changes to graphics; and
- C. To correct typographical or cross-reference errors.

**SECTION 4.** If any portion of the UDO is for any reason held invalid or unconstitutional by any Court of competent jurisdiction, such portion shall be deemed severable, and such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions thereof. All laws, regulations or ordinances which are in conflict with the UDO are repealed as of the effective date hereof.

**SECTION 5.** The UDO has been adopted following a duly advertised public hearing held by Town Council and upon a recommendation and statement of consistency from the Town's Planning Board.

**ORDAINED** by Town Council for the Town of Valdese, North Carolina, this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of February, 2025.

THE TOWN OF VALDESE,  
a North Carolina Municipal Corporation

/s/ Charles Watts, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Town Clerk

**VALDESE TOWN COUNCIL ZONING, SUBDIVISION, FLOOD DAMAGE PREVENTION ORDINANCE  
TEXT AMENDMENT  
CONSISTENCY AND REASONABLENESS STATEMENT**

On February 3, 2025, the Valdese Town Council met to consider the Text Amendment Petition to replace the Town's Zoning, Subdivision, and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances with the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and received a recommendation from the Valdese Planning Board. After considering the Plan (defined below), ordinances, recommendations, and other materials presented, the Valdese Town Council makes the following findings and conclusions:

1. In 2014, the Town of Valdese adopted a comprehensive land use plan entitled "The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future" (hereinafter the "Plan"). The Plan identifies the type of community that Valdese wants to become in the future and the strategies that the Town will use to guide development and land use activities.
2. The UDO is intended to combine the zoning, subdivision, and Flood Damage Prevention ordinances into one comprehensive document that simplifies the Town's ordinances into a more readable document.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

3. North Carolina General Statute 160D-605(a) provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

When adopting or rejecting any zoning text or map amendment, the governing board shall approve a brief statement describing whether its action is consistent or inconsistent with an adopted comprehensive or land-use plan. The requirement for a plan consistency statement may also be met by a clear indication in the minutes of the governing board that at the time of action on the amendment, the governing board was aware of and considered the Planning Board's recommendations and any relevant portions of an adopted comprehensive or land-use plan. If a zoning map amendment is adopted and the action was deemed inconsistent with the adopted plan, the zoning amendment has the effect of also amending any future land-use map in the approved plan, and no additional request or application for a plan amendment is required. A plan amendment and a zoning amendment may be considered concurrently.

4. The Text Amendment adopting the UDO is consistent with and supports the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan priorities, and is reasonable in the public interest including, but not limited to, the following:
- (a) Brings the Town's ordinances into compliance with current state statutes;
  - (b) Protection of the natural environment and quality of life for the community by including the floodplain and watershed ordinances within the UDO;
  - (c) Providing a clear and easy to understand ordinance by combining currently separate ordinances into one cohesive document, enhancing formatting for readability, and by adding use tables to clearly illustrate what uses are permitted within zoning districts and steps for approval.
  - (d) The UDO is consistent with the current land use plan, Valdese Vision Land Use Action Plan.
5. The Planning Board, at their December 16, 2024 meeting, voted five to zero to recommend that the Town Council amend the Town's Zoning, Subdivision, and Flood Damage Prevention ordinances to implement the UDO in their place.
6. The Valdese Town Council hereby finds Zoning, Subdivision, Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance Text Amendment regarding adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to be *consistent* with the Plan.

Based upon the recommendation of the Valdese Planning Board and the findings from the public hearing, the Valdese Town Council, having found Zoning, Subdivision, Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance Text Amendment regarding adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to be consistent and reasonable with the Plan and approves.

THE TOWN OF VALDESE,  
a North Carolina Municipal Corporation

/s/ Charles Watts, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Town Clerk

Mayor Watts asked if anyone wished to speak either for or against the public hearing. Hearing none, Mayor Watts closed the public hearing.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to adopt the proposed Ordinance adopting the UDO and adopting the Consistency & Reasonableness Statement, seconded by Councilman Harvey. The vote was unanimous and carried.



**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

(The full UDO is available on the Town's website and can also be obtained from the Clerk's Office or the Planning Office.)

**APPROVED PUBLIC HEARING – REZONING OF 401 MORGAN ST. SE, VALDESE** Mayor Watts opened the Public Hearing. Ashley Young, WPCOG Senior Community & Regional Planner, Interim Town Planner for the TOV presented the following information:

**Property Location:** 401 Morgan St SE, Valdese 28645

**PIN:** 2743240010

**ACREAGE:** 0.36 acres

**REQUESTED ACTION:** Rezone property from M-1 to R-8

**BACKGROUND:** The existing parcel is zoned for manufacturing use and is currently used as a daycare facility. The owner wishes to bring the existing use into conformity. A rezoning to R-8 Residential would allow for a daycare facility with a special use permit.

**REVIEW CRITERIA:**

1. Existing land uses in the general vicinity of the subject's property
  - **North:** The properties are zoned R-8 Residential and are occupied by a mix of single-family homes and institutional uses.
  - **South:** The property is zoned M-1 Manufacturing and contains manufacturing uses.
  - **East:** The property is zoned M-1 Manufacturing and contains residential use.
  - **West:** The property is zoned M-1 Manufacturing and contains manufacturing uses.
2. **Traffic:** Morgan St SE dead ends into the manufacturing facility behind 401 Morgan St. The subject parcel is currently operated as a daycare facility, and traffic is not projected to change with rezoning.
3. **Public Services:** The proposed amendment will not cause public services to fall below acceptable levels. Public services are in place and currently service the area. These public services include water and sewer, police, and fire protection.
4. **Consistency of the proposed zoning with the Valdese Vision:** A Land Use; The proposed zoning designation of R-8 Residential is compatible with the future land use of "residential" in the Valdese Vision adopted by the Valdese Town Council.
5. **Planning Board Recommendation:** Planning Board reviewed the petition on December 16, 2024 and unanimously recommended approval by Council.



0 75 150  
 Feet  
 1 inch = 110 feet  
 1:1,325

### Burke County, NC

**Owner:** MIMI'S KIDZ LLC  
 2343 DULATOWN HEIGHTS RD  
 LENOIR, NC 28645

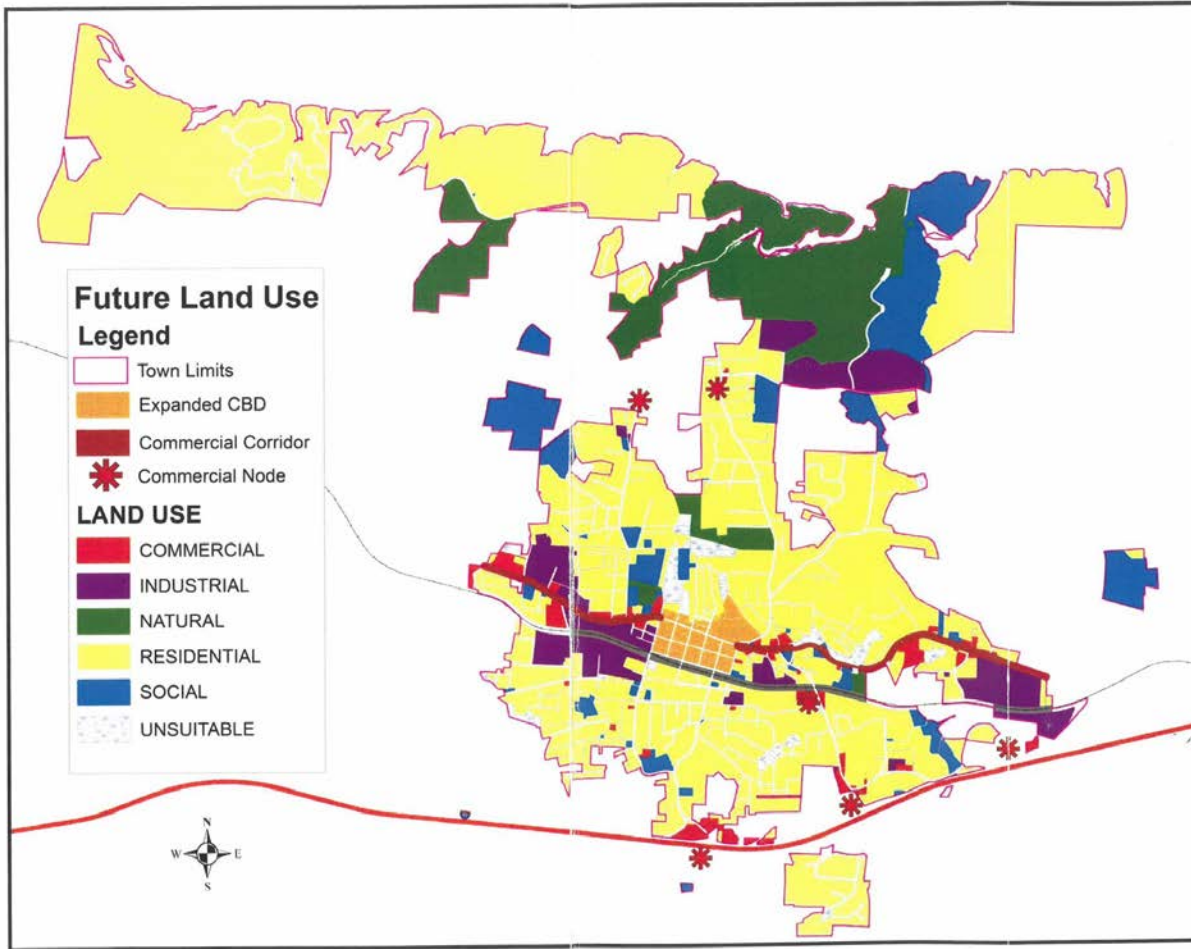
**Property Address:** 401 MORGAN ST SE  
 VALDESE 28690  
 PROPERTY\_DESC

**PIN:** 2743240010  
**PIN EXT:** 000  
**REID:** 44213

**Property Value:**  
**Acreage:** 0.36  
**Deed Book:** 002764  
**Deed Page:** 00284  
**Deed Date:** 09/04/2024



*Disclaimer: The information contained on this page is taken from aerial mapping, tax mapping, and public records and is NOT to be construed or used as a survey or legal description. Only a licensed professional land surveyor can legally determine precise locations, elevations, length and direction of a line, and an area.*



*The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future*

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Staff finds Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE to be considered **consistent** with the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future, and recommends approval with the following consistency statement:

Consistency Statement: The Town of Valdese Council approves the rezoning application for 401 Morgan St SE from M-1 to R-8 as consistent with the recommendations made by the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future; reflecting the property's designation as a residential district on the future land use map.

**VALDESE TOWN COUNCIL ZONING MAP AMENDMENT  
CONSISTENCY AND REASONABLENESS STATEMENT**

On February 3, 2025, the Valdese Town Council met to consider Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE and received a recommendation from the Valdese Planning Board. After considering the Plan (defined below), ordinances, maps, recommendations, and other materials presented, the Valdese Town Council makes the following findings and conclusions:

7. In 2014, the Town of Valdese adopted a comprehensive land use plan entitled "The Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan for the Future" (hereinafter the "Plan"). The Plan identifies the type of community that Valdese wants to become in the future and the strategies that the Town will use to guide development and land use activities.
8. The owner of the property submitted a Rezoning Petition recommended by the Town of Valdese Planning Board requesting to rezone the property from M-1 Manufacturing to R-8 Residential:

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

401 Morgan St SE and further identified by parcel ID number 2743240010.

9. The purpose of Manufacturing District (M-1) is to establish and preserve areas for industrial and related uses of such a nature that they do not create serious problems of compatibility with other kinds of commercial uses which are most appropriately located as neighbors of industrial uses or which are necessary to service the immediate needs of people in these areas.
10. The Residential District (R-8) is to provide for town-scaled residential development within walking distance (generally one fourth (1/4) mile) of services. Streets shall be interconnected, and a range of lot sizes is encouraged. The Neighborhood Residential District is to permit the completion and conformity of residential subdivisions.
11. The property is presently used as a daycare, which is allowed in the R-8 Residential District.
12. Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE is intended to bring the existing use of the property into conformance with the Town's zoning ordinance.
13. North Carolina General Statute 160D-605(a) provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

When adopting or rejecting any zoning text or map amendment, the governing board shall approve a brief statement describing whether its action is consistent or inconsistent with an adopted comprehensive or land-use plan. The requirement for a plan consistency statement may also be met by a clear indication in the minutes of the governing board that at the time of action on the amendment, the governing board was aware of and considered the Planning Board's recommendations and any relevant portions of an adopted comprehensive or land-use plan. If a zoning map amendment is adopted and the action was deemed inconsistent with the adopted plan, the zoning amendment has the effect of also amending any future land-use map in the approved plan, and no additional request or application for a plan amendment is required. A plan amendment and a zoning amendment may be considered concurrently.
14. The Zoning Map Amendment rezoning Morgan St SE from M-1 to R-8 is consistent with and supports the Valdese Vision: A Land Use Action Plan priorities, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - (e) Reflects the property's designation as a residential district on the future land use map.
  - (f) Meets the intent of the R-8 zoning district by providing town scaled development within walking distance of services.
15. The Town Council finds that the zoning amendment is reasonable and in the public interest based on the following:
  - (a) The rezoning of the property is consistent with that of the surrounding area;
  - (b) The use of the property will remain the same as the existing, which is allowed within the R-8 district;
  - (c) The use of the property is to be a service which the zoning district is intended to provide walkability to services;
  - (d) The rezoning is taken in the public interest to provide more services to the town;
  - (e) The use of the property will put no additional burden on the town's utilities or services.
16. The Planning Board, at their December 16, 2024 meeting, voted five to zero to recommend that the Town Council amend the Town's Zoning Map regarding 401 Morgan St SW from M-1 Manufacturing to R-8 Residential District.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

17. The Valdese Town Council hereby finds Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE regarding rezoning the property from its currently designated zoning to R-8 Residential District to be *consistent* with the Plan.

Based upon the recommendation of the Valdese Planning Board and the findings from the public hearing, the Valdese Town Council, having found Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE in regards to rezoning from M-1 Manufacturing to R-8 Residential District to be consistent and reasonable with the Plan and approves Rezoning Petition 401 Morgan St SE.

THE TOWN OF VALDESE,  
a North Carolina Municipal Corporation

/s/ Charles Watts, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Town Clerk

Mayor Watts asked if anyone wished to speak either for or against the public hearing. Hearing none, Mayor Watts closed the public hearing.

Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to approve the Rezoning request to R8 Residential, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Councilwoman Zimmerman made a motion to adopt the proposed Consistency & Reasonableness Statement, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**ADOPTED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT-INFRASTRUCTURE (CDBG-I) DOCUMENTS** Ben Willis, WPCOG Community and Economic Development Director, addressed the Mayor and Council regarding the Berrytown project, noting that the documents in the meeting packet include various plans required for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). These plans cover public meeting access and language access provisions to ensure that non-English speakers can engage with town processes.

The Council discussed the next steps for the project, confirming that a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be issued soon, with construction expected to begin in two to three months. The project is funded through three combined Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) totaling over \$3 million, covering all costs, including the RFQ process, without financial burden to the Town. WPCOG staff will work closely with Mr. Weichel to ensure compliance with proper protocols. The grant operates on a reimbursement basis, meaning expenses will be covered upfront and later reimbursed. It was noted that significant effort went into securing the grant, which will fund necessary water line improvements that the Town would have otherwise had to cover independently. Council members expressed appreciation for the work involved in obtaining these funds.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to adopt the CDBG-I documents, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous.

(Copies of all 13 documents are available upon request from the Clerk's Office.)

**APPROVED RFQ FOR ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE BERRYTOWN WATERLINE REPLACEMENT PROJECT DOCUMENTS** Ben Willis, WPCOG Community and Economic Development Director, informed the Council that with the necessary adoption complete, the Town can now submit the required documents to Raleigh and begin the RFQ process.

**TOWN OF VALDESE  
BERRYTOWN COMMUNITY  
NC DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY – CDBG-I AND  
NC DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE – CDBG-NR  
WATER LINE REPLACEMENT  
RFQ for ENGINEERING SERVICES**

**Overview and Purpose**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

The Town of Valdese, North Carolina is requesting statements of qualifications from qualified professional civil engineers for the design, bidding, and construction oversight upgrades to replace approximately 8,215 linear feet of existing 2-inch PVC, 4-inch PVC, and 6-inch asbestos cement water mains (circa 1965) with 8,215 linear feet of 6" PVC water line. Additionally, the project calls for the installation of fire hydrants and other appurtenances six (6) roads within the project area. The project is in the Berrytown community just outside the Valdese town limits.

This project is funded by the NC Department of Environmental Quality through its Infrastructure program and through the NC Department of Commerce through its Neighborhood Revitalization program.

The overall objectives of this project include the following:

- Planning, design, and permitting for the proposed project
- Preparing bid documents and specifications
- Providing assistance with bidding, bid tabulation, and recommendation of award
- Construction phase administration and observation
- Potential Federal funding requirements

**Project Design Schedule**

Due to regulations and timelines imposed upon projects being funded through federal resources, it is imperative that the Town of Valdese begin work on this project as practicable.

**Project Schedule**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
Engineering RFQ Submittal	February 28, 2025
Engineering Firm Contract Approval	April 7, 2025
Engineering Report Submitted & Received to DEQ	TBD
Engineering Report Approved by Division	TBD
Bid and Design Package Submitted & Received	November 11, 2025
Bid and Design Package Approved by Division	March 15, 2026
Advertise Project, Receive Bids, Submit Bid Information, and Receive Authority to Award	June 30, 2026
Execute Construction Contract(s)	August 31, 2026
Construction: Grant Contract Expiration	September 30, 2027
Construction: Final Report and Final Reimbursement Submitted & Received	November 4, 2027
Planning & Construction: Grant Closeout Submitted & Received	December 19, 2027

**Scope of Work**

To be considered for selection, the firm/team shall be qualified and capable to provide the necessary professional services associated with project tasks and conformance with local, state, and federal requirements listed herein.

1. Planning, field surveys and mapping, geotechnical investigations, utility location, design and preparation of sealed drawings and construction documents (plans and specifications), and cost estimations.
2. Perform all project management and quality control/quality assurance duties for the survey, design, bidding, and construction oversight.
3. Provide necessary documentation needed for any federal reporting requirements related to the project.
4. Prepare all necessary applications to secure required permits and approvals for construction by NCDEQ, NCDOT, or other necessary permitting agencies.
5. Provide assistance during the construction bidding process to include participation in the pre-bid conference, replying to requests for information, preparing advertisements for bid solicitations, conduct bid opening, preparing a certified bid tabulation, preparing a formal recommendation for award, and issuing the notice to proceed.
6. Construction Administration duties shall include conducting a pre-construction conference, review of project progress (inspections) review of shop drawings and submittals, certification of contractor requests for payment, processing of change orders, preparation of pre-final and final punch lists and project closeout. Provide hard and digital copies of as-built drawings.

**Qualifications and Submittal Instructions**

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

Qualification submittals must be received by 5:00 p.m. eastern time on XXXXXXXX in order to be considered for evaluation under this RFQ.

**SUBMITTAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Three (3) copies of the Qualification Submittals should be submitted to Bo Weichel – Interim Town Manager, PO Box 339, Valdese, NC 28690 no later than the submission deadline noted above. Submittals received after the submission deadline will not be considered. Alternative submission methods may be accommodated as needed.

**SUBMITTAL FORMAT**

Submittals should be limited to fifteen (15) numbered pages excluding front and back cover pages. Please include a letter which identifies a contact person for your firm as well as legal firm name and address information. The following format is encouraged in order to provide consistency between submittals, aiding in evaluation and comparison. If the format below is modified, please ensure to include the following information at a minimum:

- **Individual or Firm Information on a Cover Letter:** Project statement, legal name of firm, and the name, address, telephone number, and email address of a contact person for questions concerning the qualification submittal.
- **Public Utility Experience and References:** Provide a narrative of your firm's prior experience and qualifications with projects of similar size and complexity. A general description of the team's capabilities, including information related to the history, overall size of the firm, location of firm headquarters, and local offices. Provide references for recently completed projects of similar scope or size to this proposed project including past team member experience, if any, with those projects. For past project references please provide a contact name, position, physical address, phone number, and email address.
- **Project Team:** Provide a list of the project team members, including the office location where they currently work, and identify the responsibility of each team member. For proposed sub consultants, please provide the name of each firm, the office location, contact name, telephone number, and the services to be provided. Only staff who will be directly involved with the execution of the project should be included.  
**Proposed Work Plan and Schedule for Activities:** Based upon the information contained herein, provide a brief narrative explaining the overall approach and timeline your firm/team will take to complete this project.
- **Other Supporting Data:** Please include any other information that you feel is relevant to the evaluation of your firm for this project.

**RFQ CONTACT**

Inquiries regarding this RFQ process should be directed to Ben Willis – Community & Economic Development Director for the Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Prospective firms may make inquiries to obtain clarification of the requirements contained within this Request for Qualifications (RFQ). All inquiries shall be submitted in writing via email to the following address: ben.willis@wpcog.org or calling (828) 485-4280. All inquiries must be received by 5:00 p.m. eastern time on XXXXXXXXXX.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Qualification submittals should address all aspects of this RFQ and clearly express an understanding of the requirements and qualifications to conduct these services in a thorough and efficient manner. Evaluation of qualification submittals will be performed by Valdese staff.

Submissions will be evaluated according to the following factors equally:

- Qualifications, Competence and Reputation of Firm and Personnel;
- Firm's Capability to Meet Time and Project Budget Requirements;
- Project Workload of Firm;
- Related Experience on Similar Projects.

All firms who choose to respond with a Qualifications Submittal will be evaluated by Town of Valdese staff based on the criteria set forth above. The Town of Valdese reserves the right to reject any or all Qualifications Submittals received in response to this Request for Qualifications and to select the

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

firm/team who are most advantageous to the Town of Valdese. Final selection and contracting will be subject to approval by the Valdese Town Council.

**NONDISCRIMINATION & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYEEER**

The Town of Valdese is an Equal Opportunity Employer and invites the submission of qualifications from all entities including those designated as minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE), historically underutilized businesses (HUB), and certified/registered Section 3 businesses.

The Town of Valdese complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities which prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving state and federal assistance. The Town of Valdese does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, age, national origin, religion, or disability, in employment or provision of services.

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

All qualification submittals shall become the property of the Town of Valdese once submitted for consideration and will only be returned to the submitting firm at the Town's option and discretion. Any restrictions on the use of the information and data contained within the qualification submittal must be clearly stated in the submittal itself.

The cost of preparing, submitting, and presenting a submittal is the sole responsibility of the submitting firm. The Town of Valdese shall not be held liable for any costs, direct or indirect, associated with the development, submission, or presentation of any submittal in response to this Request for Qualifications.

The Town of Valdese reserves the right to reject any and all qualification submittals, to consider alternatives, to waive irregularities, and to re-solicit a Request for Qualifications. The Town of Valdese further reserves the right to cancel the RFQ in part or in whole at any time. This Request for Qualifications shall in no way obligate the Town of Valdese to award a contract for this project. The Town of Valdese makes no guarantees to any proposing firm until such time as the Town approves a contract for engineering services for this project.

The Town of Valdese will provide information and clarification related to this Request for Qualifications where available.

Está disponible en español o en cualquier otro idioma bajo petición. Póngase en contacto con Bo Weichel at 828-879-2123 or Town of Valdese, PO Box 339, Valdese, NC 28690.

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**POSTED WITH FAIR HOUSING AND EEO LOGOS**

Councilman Harvey made a motion to approve the RFQ for engineering services for the Berrytown Waterline Replacement Project, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**PRESENTATION OF FINANCIAL UPDATE FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024**

Phil Church with Lowdermilk Church & Co. shared that they gave a clean, unmodified opinion on our compliance and completed a Yellow Book audit. Mr. Church introduced Rick Hammer with Lowdermilk Church & Co., who reported that the Local Government Commission (LGC) reviewed and approved the Town's audit with no corrections or issues. Additionally, the Town's Yellow Book report showed no compliance findings.

Mr. Hammer provided financial highlights for the fiscal year ending June 30, noting that the General Fund had total assets of just under \$9 million and a total fund balance of \$8,724,530. Revenues totaled \$7.2 million, with expenditures of \$5,651,000. After transfers, the General Fund balance increased by \$588,030. Ad valorem tax collections reached \$2,956,235, with a collection rate of 99.37%. Investment income in the General Fund was approximately \$672,000. The available fund balance percentage stood at 102.17%, well above the LGC's minimum recommendation.

Mr. Hammer noted for the Water and Sewer Fund, cash and investments totaled \$4.8 million, with total assets of \$29,479,608 and a net position of over \$23.1 million. Revenues amounted to \$6,149,682, with expenditures of \$6,052,000, resulting in an operating income of \$97,000. After transfers and grant contributions, the Water and Sewer Fund had a net income of \$42,548. Accounts receivable at year-end were \$752,344, and investment income for the fund was approximately \$46,000. The unrestricted equity



**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

ratio for the Water and Sewer Fund improved to just under 80%, an increase of about 10% from the previous year.

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**TOWN OF VALDESE**

**Financial Highlights  
Years Ended June 30, 2024 and 2023**

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<b>General Fund (Includes Powell Bill Funds)</b>	<b>2024 Summarized Budget</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Cash, cash equivalents and investments		\$ 7,470,706	\$ 7,258,921
Total assets		\$ 8,959,015	\$ 8,371,905
Fund balance		\$ 8,724,530	\$ 8,136,499
Fund balance - Reserved for Streets - Powell Bill (included in total fund balance)		\$ 111,674	\$ 68,154
Total revenue	\$ 6,098,780	\$ 7,202,594	\$ 6,358,347
Total expenditures	\$ 6,262,112	\$ 5,651,273	\$ 5,355,041
Revenues over (under) expenditures before other financing sources (uses)		\$ 1,551,322	\$ 1,003,306
Other income (expense)	\$ 163,333	\$ (963,290)	\$ 43,621
Increase (decrease) in fund balance		\$ 588,030	\$ 1,046,927
Ad valorem taxes collected		\$ 2,956,235	\$ 2,430,847
Percent of taxes collected - current year levy		99.37%	97.80%
Investment income		\$ 671,522	\$ 418,578
<b>Fund Balance Available</b>			
Unassigned Fund Balance		<u>6,983,906</u>	<u>6,587,565</u>
Expenditures and other financing sources and uses		6,835,563	6,236,741
Unassigned Fund Balance Percentage		102.17%	105.62%
		<b><u>2024</u></b>	<b><u>2023</u></b>
<b>Water and Sewer Fund</b>			
Cash, cash equivalents and investments		\$ 4,773,926	\$ 3,879,495
Total assets		\$29,479,608	\$29,578,325
Net position		\$23,146,777	\$23,104,329
Operating revenue		\$ 6,149,682	\$ 5,739,522
Operating expenses		\$ 6,052,280	\$ 5,867,425
Operating income (loss)		\$ 97,402	\$ (127,903)
Nonoperating revenue (expenses)		\$ 7,764	\$ 226,189
Transfers (to) from		\$ (221,000)	\$ 372,548
Capital Contributions		\$ 158,382	\$ 37,082
Change in net position, includes \$1,392,124 of depreciation expense 2024		\$ 42,548	\$ 507,916
Accounts receivable - customers		\$ 752,344	\$ 691,385
Investment income		\$ 46,405	\$ 31,284
Days sales in accounts receivable		44.65	43.96
<b>Fund Balance Available</b>			
Unrestricted Fund Balance		<u>\$ 4,988,354</u>	<u>\$ 4,249,010</u>
Expenditures and other financing sources and uses		6,273,280	6,136,571
Unrestricted Fund Balance Percentage		79.51%	69.24%

Mr. Church explained that the Town's financial statements include two types of reporting: one similar to a business, which records depreciation and capital assets, and another based on a modified accrual basis, which aligns with the Town's budgeting method.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

Council members discussed the audit, noting the educational value of reviewing financial reports. A suggestion was made for a detailed briefing session to go through the audit report, which could be live-streamed for public transparency. There was general support for the idea, with the possibility of scheduling such a session.

A discussion followed regarding water and sewer fees, clarifying that revenue from water sales remains in the utility fund, with only administrative cost transfers to the General Fund. Concerns were raised about public perception, especially from residents facing increased rates, but it was confirmed that water fees do not subsidize general Town services.

Regarding long-term debt, it was noted that reported loan balances reflect what would be owed as of June 30, 2024. The Town's fund balance was reported at 123.6% of annual expenditures, a positive indicator. The increase in assets and liabilities by approximately \$2 million was attributed to the \$2.2 million received for the Hoyle Creek project. It was highlighted that 2024 revenues exceeded the budget by \$1.1 million, while expenditures were \$600,000 over budget, resulting in a net addition of \$588,000 to reserves.

A final discussion centered on the cost of employees using Town vehicles for commuting. The IRS standard of charging \$1.50 per trip was followed, but concerns were raised about the actual cost to the Town and its fairness. The issue was noted as a potential morale concern among employees and a point of contention for some citizens.

**TABLED RESOLUTION WITHDRAWING LOVELADY RD SIDEWALK PHASE I PROJECT APPLICATION**

**1<sup>st</sup> Motion:** Councilman Harvey made a motion that the Council withdraw the Town's applications to the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization in the amount of \$3,671,660.00 and commitment of \$734,332.00 as a cash match for Lovelady Road sidewalk phases 1 & 2, as approved on June 3, 2024, on the consent agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

**Discussion:** Councilman Harvey, the Town's representative on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization, provided an update on funding opportunities. In April of last year, he learned that \$3.5 million in federal funds were available for municipalities in the four-county region. He advised the Planning Director and Interim Manager to submit a reasonable request for eligible projects, such as sidewalks or traffic improvements. Due to the requirement for engineering drawings, the Planning Director primarily relied on the Burke River Trail Association for a proposal. The Town ultimately submitted a request for \$3.6 million, exceeding the available funds. TAC approved funding for half of the request, and the matter was presented to the Town Council in January. However, no motion or second was made to commit the Town's required \$286,000 match, effectively ending the discussion. Councilman Harvey expressed concern over how to proceed, as the Town now holds approved funding but has taken no action. If the Town withdraws the application, the funds would be reallocated, allowing Valdese and other municipalities to apply for new projects. If the Town retains the funds without a plan, it could be perceived as withholding opportunities from other communities. He emphasized that the Council is not required to act immediately but urged consideration of the ethical implications of keeping the funds indefinitely.

Councilwoman Lowman noted that we have one – two years an act on this and a group has offered to find the money to match it so the Town does not have to come up with the money. Councilwoman Lowman asked why we would let this go and noted that you don't give back grant money.

Councilwoman Ward would like to see it tabled a month so she can get all the information to fully understand and suggested talking with Representative Hugh Blackwell and Beth Heile. Councilman Ogle agrees and feels we need more information.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Motion:** Councilman Ogle made a motion to table the Resolution Withdrawing Lovelady Rd Sidewalk Phase I project application to the next regularly scheduled Council meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Lowman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**RECREATION DEPARTMENT EXPENDITURE OVERVIEW: 7-YEAR ANALYSIS** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel provided the following report:

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

At the January 27th pre-agenda meeting, in response to the proposed budget amendment for gutter repairs, Council requested the following information along with the attached.

•**Splash Park:** Splash Pad Water Feature is used in summer months for families and visitors, and is controlled by timer and smart switch for easy cut off in storms. Picnic shelter reservable for parties on weekends in warmer months and generates revenue. Inside space is used for group fitness classes every weekday, and it is rented out on Saturdays year around and Sunday afternoons in the summer for revenue.

•**Wayne Owens Gymnasium:** Used by public and programming year around. Public access weekdays starting at 5:30am until either 5pm or 8pm depending on programming. Saturday and Sunday hours are dependent on season and programming. Adults and youth access and utilize it. Space is not utilized for rentals.

•**Swimming Pool:** Used by patrons from all around, not just Valdese. Revenue is generated through memberships (not required for use), day passes, swim lessons, pool parties, swim teams (Rec, private, and school related), and lifeguard and first responder training sessions.

•**Tiger Gym:** Currently being used exclusively in late October-early March for youth athletic programming, used year around for football equipment storage. Used in late summer/early fall as a support facility for football games.

Capital Investment at Community Center, Splash Pad, & Maintenance/Repairs at Recreation Buildings (2018-Present)							
Project	Donor Funds	Grant Funds	Town Funds	Loan	Loan Interest	Total Cost	Loan Balance
Splash Pad & Facility	250,000	408,600		469,000	310,320	1,437,920	642,939
Community Center - Gymnasium Renovation	187,139		166,007			353,146	
Community Center - Downstairs Renovation			617,317			617,317	
Fitness Center - equipment 2020			7,953			7,953	
Community Center - Security Cameras			10,675			10,675	
Pool - pumps, plumbing, leak repairs, equipment			23,890			23,890	
HVAC - heat pump replacement			7,400			7,400	
Pool - heaters and plumbing			25,640			25,640	
HVAC -boiler (gas piping,ductwork,electrical)			15,380			15,380	
Pool - cleaner Magnum PVA			4,134			4,134	
Bowling - Kustodian Plus bowling unit (used)			12,000			12,000	
Tennis Courts - resurfance and crack repair			19,371			19,371	
Bowling - Quibica 8 lane scoring package+install			15,317			15,317	
Pool - cover			13,425			13,425	
Bowling - pin decks+install			25,600			25,600	
Bowling - lane repairs and resurfacing			15,680			15,680	
Bowling - party room flooring			4,942			4,942	
Fitness Center - equipment 2024			18,295			18,295	
Maintenance and Repairs of Facilities							
2018			115,181			115,181	
2019			130,432			130,432	
2020			97,526			97,526	
2021			32,803			32,803	
2022			39,171			39,171	
2023			61,208			61,208	
2024			58,591			58,591	
2025			16,937			16,937	
						<b>\$3,179,934</b>	<b>\$642,939</b>

Councilwoman Lowman asked when the Recreation Center was built. Parks & Recreation Director David Andersen said 1938. Councilwoman Lowman noted that a building that old is going to require lots of maintenance. Mr. Weichel said that the Recreation Center had some recent damage with flooding and will need some attention soon.

**STATUS OF ONGOING OR APPROVED PROJECTS**

- i. **Public Safety Facilities Update** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel noted that since the pre-agenda meeting, the town received submissions from seven general contractors for the design-build process. The next step involves evaluating the statement qualifications, which are approximately 30 pages each, before selecting two or three finalists for interviews. A review committee needs to be formed to carry out this evaluation.

Discussion ensued regarding the selection process, with emphasis on involving individuals with experience in large-scale construction projects. A recommendation was made to include local industry professionals who have managed significant renovations or construction projects, fostering stronger relationships between the town and its industrial partners.

A timeline was outlined, aiming for the review process to be completed by mid-month, interviews scheduled by the end of the month, and a phase one contractor selected for the April council meeting. It was noted that while the Facilities Review Committee remains active, additional knowledgeable members may be added to assist in the selection process.

- ii. **Water Plant Upgrade Project/Lenoir Interconnect Project** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel said the project consists of two parts, with progress dependent on decisions from the City of Lenoir before certain aspects can move forward. The town is currently in the design phase for equipment upgrades at the plant. McGill Engineering has been conducting site assessments, including recording data, drawing plans, surveying, and reviewing the electrical system. McGill is also coordinating with Lenoir, as they hold the contract for extending the line across the river. Once Lenoir finalizes the placement of their pump stations, the design for the river crossing can proceed. While this remains a multi-year project, steady progress is being made.  
The town has received \$7 million in grant funding for the project, while an additional \$23 million was allocated to the Town of Lenoir. A key benefit for Valdese will be the ability to sell water to Lenoir, enhancing system redundancy and financial sustainability.
- iii. **FY 25 Year-To-Date Financial Results** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel reviewed the following:

GENERAL:

Total expenditures = 52.94% (compared to 55.02% prior year)

Total revenues = 60.49% (compared to 60.59% prior year)

Items to note:

- Administration Salary 43.32% (\$29k under budget) - due to Town Manager Position
- Ad Valorem Tax revenue 71.81%. \$210,491 less tax revenue compared to prior year.  
January will have January collection data around mid February from the County.
- Sales tax revenue 50.72% - on track with budget estimate. Have noticed a decrease from prior year of 1.3% overall
- ORS facility Rentals and Auditorium revenue 34.78% - compared to 51.88% prior year - this is mainly due to the renovation project. This was anticipated and it is expected to make a full recovery.
- Rec Community Center revenues 37.65% - compared to 46.12% prior year - this is mainly due to the pool being down for the past few months. This will be offset by a savings in part time labor (lifeguards).

UTILITY:

Total expenditures = 38.33% (compared to 50.96% prior year) - this will increase next six months due capital items

Total revenues = 48.48% (compared to 49.74% prior year)

Items to note:

- Water and Sewer revenues are 52.50% and 54.80% respectively, compared to 52.84% and 54.43% prior year.  
This shows we charging the correct rates and budgeting the correct amounts.
- 

- iv. **Strategic Plan: Citizens Priorities** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel said the second round of water bills went out with the surveys and WPCOG will be at the March 31, 2025 pre-agenda meeting to give Council the results.
- v. **Status of Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel reviewed the following:

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

The town entered in to a contract with the WPCOG in March 2024 to complete a comprehensive parks and recreation plan between May 2024 and June 2025.

More specifics on the plan scope and deliverables are contained in the attached agreement.

With regards to plan components seeking town staff and citizen input, WPCOG staff met with full time parks and recreation staff and the Valdese Parks and Recreation Commission during the summer of 2024.

The WPCOG staff members created a survey and collected both online and in-person/paper responses which were available for pick up at the community center. Online surveys were made available via social media and through QR codes posted at facilities and during programming. The survey responses were collected over the course of August and September, 2024. There were 321 responses.

Additional informal, drop-in meetings for feedback from citizens will be provided on Tuesday, January 28 and Saturday, February 1 at the Splash Pad building at 11am and 10am respectively. Citizens will have a chance to review survey responses and offer additional feedback at these meetings.

Once the public drop-in meetings are completed – WPGOG will begin drafting chapters of the plan, conducting inventories at parks, etc.

Per the contract, the estimated completion date is June 30, 2025

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- vi. **Town Manager Search Process** Mayor Watts stated that the Council is meeting with WPCOG tonight to refine and further prioritize key aspects of the search.

**POTENTIAL VALDESE TOWN CHARTER AMENDMENT** Councilman Harvey brought up the possibility of amending the town’s charter to change the mayor’s term from four years back to two years, as it was for the first 80 years until 2000. He encouraged citizens to share their opinions on the matter. If the change is to be pursued, it would need to be addressed soon—likely at the next meeting—since it must go to referendum and be finalized before the filing period for the next election in July. He noted that a two-year term could allow the mayor to be more actively involved in council elections, which occur every two years.

Councilwoman Lowman expressed her support for maintaining the mayor’s four-year term, citing several key reasons. She emphasized that longer terms provide stability and continuity in leadership, allowing mayors more time to develop and implement policies without frequent election disruptions. She noted that long-term planning is essential for projects related to infrastructure and community development, and a four-year term enables mayors to see these initiatives through. Additionally, she highlighted that less frequent elections allow mayors to focus more on governance rather than campaigning, build stronger relationships with officials and residents, and attract more qualified candidates. She also pointed out that longer terms give voters a better opportunity to assess a mayor’s performance and help reduce political volatility by preventing rapid leadership changes that could hinder progress.

Councilwoman Ward emphasized the importance of council members maintaining professionalism and impartiality during the next election cycle. She stated that as representatives of the town, it is crucial to remain respectful and refrain from influencing the election outcome. While council members have the right to vote, she stressed that it is not their role to determine who joins the council. She encouraged everyone to uphold the town’s reputation, remain neutral, and approach the election with fairness, wishing all candidates the best.

**FY 25-26 BUDGET PLANS AND SCHEDULE**

- i. **Review of General Schedule** Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel reviewed the FY 25-26 Budget schedule.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

Town of Valdese  
FY 25-26 Budget Preparation Schedule

2025 Dates	Item
January 14-22	Department heads meet with Interim Manager for mid-year budget review. Budget kickoff with Interim Manager. Discuss big picture goals.
End of January	Interim Manager prepares formatted worksheets for each Department and distributes operating worksheet
February 6	Utility Fund CIP and Rate Study draft begins with meetings, data sharing, etc.
March 1	Department operational draft budget worksheet due (NCGS 159-10 requests due to Manager / Budget Officer before April 30)
March 11-14	Interim Manager reviews operating draft budget with each Department Head
March 18-28	Interim Manager provides feedback on operating and capital budgets and adjusts
End of March	Utility Fund CIP and Rate Study draft reviewed by Interim Manager in preparation for Budget Review #1
April 15-16	Budget Review #1 with Council (review services, employee benefits, etc.) Town Hall Council Chambers
mid April - early May	Feedback from Council during Review #1 incorporated into budget draft
May 12	Budget Review #2 with Council (present fined tuned budget draft)
mid May	Feedback from Council during Review #2 incorporated into proposed budget
May 23	Manager's budget message due for proposed budget
May 28	Proposed budget completed and submitted for June agenda packet Proposed budget is also delivered separately to Council to meet NCGS 159-11 (NCGS 159-11 Budget with budget message shall be submitted to governing board no later than June 1)
June 2	Council Meeting-Budget Presented to Council and Set Public Hearing Date (Time/Place of public hearing to be published with budget information available to the public)
June 23	Council Meeting-Budget Public Hearing and Budget Ordinance Adoption (NCGS 156-13 Not earlier than 10 days after the day the budget is presented to the board and not later than June 30th, the Board shall adopt a budget ordinance)

ii. **Plan for Review of Budget-Related Employee Benefits: Payroll Plan, Position Vacancies, Group Insurance Premium, Etc.** No discussion.

iii. **Other Budget Planning Considerations**

**Motion:** Councilman Harvey moved the following guidelines for the Interim Manager's direction in the development of the FY24-25 Budget:

1. The Town of Valdese shall levy ad valorem taxes on property at a rate not exceeding 41.5 cents per \$100.00 of assessed value; and
2. The budget shall be prepared such that there is no reduction in essential services or fund reserves.

Seconded by Councilwoman Ward.

**Discussion:** Councilman Harvey stated, "THE TOWN'S FINANCES ARE STRONG AND THERE IS NO REASON TO RAISE TAXES ON VALDESE PROPERTY OWNERS THIS YEAR. HERE'S WHY THE COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY SET THE SAME RATE – 41.5 CENTS:

- The 2023 tax rate (51.5 cents) was set to provide \$395,000 in new revenue, mostly for street repaving. Instead:
  - As the 6-30-24 audit shows, we collected \$220,000 more than the budgeted \$395,000 – 56% more than the manager said was needed!

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

- Interest income budgeted at \$100,000 came in at \$671,000 – \$571,000 over budget!
- And, even though the manager was terminated with a \$70,000 golden parachute and another \$90,000 had to be spent to hire an interim manager.
  - And the Old Rock School renovation bid was \$500,000 over the budget.
- The 2024 fiscal year ending June 30, budgeted in the red, with \$238,000 to come out of reserves - ended in the black by \$391,000. An improvement of over \$600,000, resulting in adding \$588,000 to the town's reserves!

*AS THE AUDIT REPORTS – THE YEAR ENDED MUCH STRONGER THAN BUDGETED!*

*HOW IS THIS YEAR GOING? AS WE HEARD – FOR THE 1<sup>ST</sup> 6 MONTHS – VERY WELL!*

- All major expense factors are running as expected – no surprises in store.
- By loading our Chief Financial Officer up with three more hats, the town will be saving \$60,000 or more in administration salaries.
- Several key revenue items already have brought in over \$190,000 more than budgeted for the entire year!
- Interest income may end the year with up to \$400,000 more than budgeted!

*DON'T WE ALL WISH OUR PERSONAL FINANCES WERE TRACKING THAT WELL?*

*WHAT ARE WE HEARING FROM CITIZENS?*

- The majority we are hearing from said – DO NOT RAISE THE TAX RATE.
- What about the silent hundreds – all those folks on the west side of town whose taxes increased 150% to 200% in 2023?
- Many are not on the Internet. They do not know what's going on at the town council and operations level. The staff stopped the newsletter that used to be mailed with the water bill. All they received last year was the Mayor's one page letter in July.
- Hundreds of folks are still struggling with the 150% to 200% tax hike they got hit with in 2023. The 20% cut in Valdese taxes in 2024 provided some relief, but they are still juggling their pension, social security, welfare, and disability income between food, medicine, utilities, and property taxes.

*HOW CAN THE STAFF MEET RISING COSTS AND STILL GET A SALARY INCREASE?*

- Perhaps like we do in our households and employment – we must exercise continuous process improvement – and focus on doing more for less!"

Councilwoman Lowman expressed concern regarding the salaries of Police Officers and inquired whether the issue would be addressed during the upcoming budget meetings. Interim Town Manager Bo Weichel acknowledged the concern, stating that a comprehensive salary survey would be necessary to evaluate police salaries as well as the entire organization. He noted that the process would take approximately six months to complete.

Councilwoman Zimmerman reminded the Council that the current tax rate is a working figure and urged them to keep it in mind as they move forward with budget discussions and decisions.

Councilwoman Ward is concerned with the elderly citizens that are scraping by to pay for things and thinks that 41.5 cents is a good number.

Mayor Watts asked if we pass the tax rate, how difficult would it be to go back and change it. Town Attorney Tim Swanson understands that there is a pending motion to basically have your Manager work within the parameters and has to work with in them unless you have another motion to change it.

**Vote:** Councilwoman Zimmerman – Yes, Councilwoman Ward – Yes, Councilman Ogle – Yes, Councilman Harvey – Yes, and Councilwoman Lowman – Yes. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**INTERIM MANAGER'S REPORT**

Bluegrass at the Rock presents: Joe Mullins & The Radio Ramblers, Saturday, February 8, 2025 at 7:30 p.m., at the Old Rock School.

**FEBRUARY 3, 2025, MB#33**

Invitation to 177<sup>th</sup> Waldensian Edict of Emancipation & Falo(bonfire) Event, Saturday, February 15, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. Event hosted by Waldensian Heritage Museum at the Old Rock School.

Next Agenda Review Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 24, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall.

OCP Production: The Last Five Years, Show Dates: February 28 – March 9, 2025, Fridays, Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. & Sundays 2:30 p.m., Location TBD

Visit [www.oldcolonyplayers.com](http://www.oldcolonyplayers.com) for more information and to purchase tickets.

Next Regular Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 3, 2025, 6:00 p.m., Council Chambers, Valdese Town Hall.

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilwoman Ward expressed her gratitude for the condolences she received following the passing of her grandmother.

Councilwoman Lowman praised the Old Colony Players' production of Willy Wonka Jr., describing it as a fantastic performance and encouraging everyone to support the group.

**CLOSED SESSION:** At 8:50 p.m., Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to go into Closed Session Pursuant to NC General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee, seconded by Councilwoman Ward. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to return to open session, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT:** At approximately 9:15 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Zimmerman. The vote was unanimous and motion carried.

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Town Clerk

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Mayor

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